

MAINE HEALTH ALERT NETWORK



*Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
(Formerly Bureau of Health)
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*****ADVISORY – Important Information*****

2009PHADV043

TO: School Nurses, School-based Health Centers, Border Medical Officers, FQHCs, ICPs, Physicians Offices, Hospitals, Labs, MEMA Duty Officer, County EMA, NNEPC, Public Health Required, PHN, RRC

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: **Hepatitis A Cluster, Swans Island, Maine – August, 2009**

DATE: **August 27, 2009**

TIME: 4:54 p.m.

PAGES: 2

PRIORITY: High

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
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Hepatitis A Cluster -- Swans Island, Hancock County, Maine – August, 2009

Background: The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) is investigating a cluster of acute hepatitis A associated with one household on Swans Island, Hancock County, Maine. Currently, six cases have been identified; 4 confirmed and 2 probable cases. There has been one death and one other individual is hospitalized. All cases identified are among out of state residents.

Hepatitis A is an uncommon disease in Maine. An average of 11 cases are identified in Maine each year. Hepatitis A can result in mild illness in children; many will be asymptomatic. In adults, hepatitis A infection can range in severity from mild to life threatening. Case fatality can reach 1.8% in adults over 50 years of age. Individuals are considered infectious during the latter half of the incubation period and for approximately 1 week after onset of jaundice. The virus is excreted in feces and is transmitted by the fecal-oral route. Good hand washing is key to limiting disease transmission.

Recommendations: Area health care providers are encouraged to consider hepatitis A infection in persons with recent onset of jaundice, fever, anorexia, fatigue, nausea, dark urine, clay colored stools, and abdominal discomfort. Diagnostic testing should include hepatitis A IgM antibody and liver enzymes (AST/ALT). Interpretation of a positive IgM test for HAV is difficult in a recently immunized individual. IgM positive results can occur from either natural infection or immunization. Confirmation of infection in recently immunized individuals is usually dependent on clinical signs and elevated liver enzymes.

All cases of suspected viral hepatitis should be reported immediately by phone to the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821. Epidemiologists are available to provide guidance on post-exposure prophylaxis with either hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin. To be effective, post exposure prophylaxis needs to be given as soon as possible, but not later than 14 days after last exposure.

For More Information: Contact Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821. Information on hepatitis A is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5641.pdf>.